

Central Water Commission
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The News Clippings on Water Resources Development and allied subjects are enclosed for perusal of the Chairman, CWC, and Member (WP&P/D&R/RM), Central Water Commission. The soft copies of clippings will be uploaded on the CWC website.

P. Maheshwari
3.1.2019
SPA (Publicity)

Encl: As stated above.

~~Deputy Director, WSE Dte.~~

[Signature]
03/01/2019

Director, WSE Dte. - O.L.

For information to

Chairman CWC, New Delhi

Member (WP&P/D&R/R.M.), CWC and all concerned, uploaded at www.cwc.nic.in

News item/letter/article/editorial Published on 03.01.2019..... in the

Hindustan Times
Statesman
The Time of India (New Delhi)
Indian Express
Tribune

Hindustan (Hindi)
Nav Bharat Times (Hindi)
Punjab Keshari (Hindi)
The Hindu (New Delhi)
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Deccan Chronicle
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The Times of India (A)
Business standard
The Economic Times

and documented at Bhagirath (English) & Publicity Section, CWC

Business Line, Delhi ✓

Why States fear the new Dam Safety Bill

It does not ensure transparency and accountability in dam management. The CWC's role points to conflict of interest

HIMANSHU THAKKAR

The Dam Safety Bill (DSB) 2018, introduced in Parliament on December 12, 2018 is much improved from the 2010 version that was referred to the Parliamentary Committee.

However, a number of States have already expressed apprehensions about the Bill. Some have put a question mark over the legislative competence of the Centre. Tamil Nadu has opposed it, fearing that the dams owned and operated by it would come under the purview of the National Dam Safety Organisation (NDSO) and that Kerala would also get access to the dam and information about it. Other States fear that the Centre may take control over all their dams.

Apparently, the DSB 2018 has been brought under Entry 56 and not under Articles 249/250 of the Constitution. This is unlike DSB 2010 that was put up before Parliament. Entry 56 of the Union List provides 'Regulation and development of Inter-State rivers and river valleys to the extent to which such regulation and development under the control of the Union is declared by Parliament to be expedient in the public interest'.

However, for use of this entry for passage of DSB 2018, Parliament would also need to declare that dam safety is expedient in the public interest. Even if Parliament were to declare that, about 8 per cent territory of the country, which is not part of inter-State river basins (they are intra-State), would remain outside the purview of the DSB 2018. However, DSB 2018 says it covers all the specified dams (essentially meaning large dams) of the country.

The DSB 2018 is certainly an improvement from DSB 2010 in a number of aspects, including inclusion of failure of "operation" of dam, not just structural failure in the definition of "dam failure" and "dam incident". The South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and

People (SANDRP) had demanded this while critiquing DSB 2010. DSB 2018 also includes provision of "Offences and Penalties" (though a rather inadequate one), inclusion of aspects like Emergency Action Plan, Comprehensive Dam Safety Evaluation by independent panel of experts, among other aspects.

Compensation factor

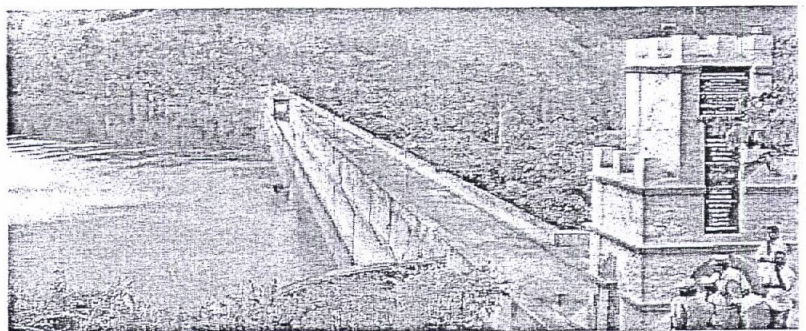
However, there is still no inclusion of compensation to the victims of dam failures or dam incidents, which was a key recommendation of the June 2011 report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee (15th Lok Sabha) on "Dam Safety Bill, 2010".

A number of other recommendations of the committee have not been included, though an August 6, 2018 note by Water Resources Minister Nitin Gadkari, attached with the DSB 2018 introduced in Parliament, says that the DSB 2018 has been prepared "incorporating the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee".

The note also says "Owing to significant modifications entailed in the Bill while complying with the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee, the Ministry of Water Resources decided to withdraw the said Bill and introduce the modified Bill. Meanwhile, the term of the 15th Lok Sabha came to an end." This does not really explain the delay.

The DSB 2018 continues to suffer from a number of lacunas, including some rather serious ones. For example, the whole dam safety mechanism is dominated by the Central Water Commission (CWC) with Chairperson of CWC being the chairman of National Committee on Dam Safety (NCDS), a representative of CWC being member of each State Committee on Dam Safety (SCDS).

However, the CWC is also involved in policymaking about dams, in their approval, guiding designs, financing, monitoring, approving seismic parameters, flood forecasting, lobbying for



A file picture of the Mullaperiyar Dam. B. JOTHIRAMALINGAM

dam projects and so on. However, Dam Safety is essentially a regulatory function and thus CWC has clear conflict of interest in being involved in the Dam Safety mechanism.

The CWC also has had very poor track record in dam safety and has always rushed to ensure that dam operators do not get blame for the wrong or unsafe operation of dams. The Kerala episode is the latest instance, where within weeks of the disaster, the CWC delegation went to Kerala and came up with a report that rather predictably claimed that dams cannot be blamed for worsening the Kerala flood disaster of August 2018, when all evidence pointed to the contrary.

Secondly, dam safety mechanism has to essentially work in public interest and the people at risk are the biggest stakeholders (unfortunately, the Bill does not even define who are the stakeholders of Dam Safety, though the term stakeholder is used in the DSB 2018) in ensuring safe design, planning, construction, operation and maintenance of dams.

This implies that all the information about dam safety should be promptly placed in the public domain and the Bill itself should mandate this. The agenda, minutes of the meetings of all the dam safety mechanisms, their decisions, information about all the

specified dams and all the incidents, failures, the evaluation reports, safety audits, emergency action plans, etc should have been mandated to be in public domain, including on dedicated National, state and dam specific websites. However, the DSB 2018 fails to ensure this.

In the same context, the DSB 2018 should have mandated in each State and national dam safety committee, organisation and authority, presence of persons having track record of taking independent positions.

Appointment of members

The Bill requires appointment of up to three (out of a total of 21 members) "specialists in the field of dam safety and allied fields" nominated by the Central and State governments respectively as members of NCDS and SCDS.

However, there is no mention of these persons having an independent track record, nor is there any mechanism mentioned as to how they will be selected.

The language of several sections (e.g. Chapter VI) of the DSB 2018 suggests that State Dam Safety Organisation is subservient to the National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA). This clubbed with the apparent lack of sufficient consultation with the States on the Bill seems to suggest that States would regard the DSB 2018 with

suspicion, as is already happening.

There is also very limited number of remaining days of functioning of the 16th Lok Sabha that is likely to have its last working day in second week of February before it is dissolved and general elections are announced. In this situation, it seems even the DSB 2018 may lapse without Parliament passing it.

This is very sorry state of affairs considering the urgent need of such a Bill. India has, according to the latest version of National Register of Large Dams, 5,701 large dams (this number is likely to be an underestimate considering that NRDL is not exhaustive, with a number of projects not included), including 447 under construction and 5,254 completed projects.

For 194 of these projects CWC does not even know year of construction! Out of the rest 5,060 completed large dams, over 87 per cent are more than 20 years old and about 370 are over 70 years old. Moreover, even newer dams are known to suffer both structural and operational failures. All this underscores the urgent need for a National Dam Safety Bill, but it seems we are not likely to see a credible statutory dam safety mechanism soon.

The writer is with South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People

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Cleaner air, Ganga, dam safety, Rules: What will matter in 2019, and why ¹⁶³

Climate change-driven events like Kerala floods underline need for greater focus on environment

SOWMIYA ASHOK
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 2

NOTWITHSTANDING EVENTS such as last year's floods in Kerala, which were at least partly due to the mismanagement of reservoirs, and the anti-Sterlite protest in Thoothukudi in which thousands came out in the streets to demand the shutting of a copper smelting plant due to pollution concerns, the environment is by and large not a factor in India's elections. Thus, apart from routine stocktaking that follows disasters, and some protests and public outbursts like the ones triggered by the plan to cut thousands of trees in New Delhi to redevelop government housing colonies, it is mostly business as usual. Extreme weather events have recurred, yet the urban sprawl has continued to swallow green spaces.

With the India Meteorological Department stating that the Kerala disaster was a consequence of climate change, there needs to be holistic policy focus on the management of water bodies, bringing down emissions, cleaning up the air across the country, and committing to stricter reforms to

protect the environment in 2019 and beyond.

Global commitments



India is committed to cultivating a carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes by 2030 under the Paris Agreement, but is lagging far behind in its forestry targets.

Anticipating that the target might not be met through forests alone, India was looking at the soil of catchment areas too, and the Ministry of Environment and Forests had proposed a "landscape-based catchment treatment plan" to bridge the gap. Such initiatives would, however, have to be institutionalised – for instance, through the Compensatory Afforestation Fund. In August last year, the Centre notified Rules on utilisation of the funds by states and Union Territories.

Quest for cleaner air

India's severely polluted air is among its greatest challenges. The Centre has recently earmarked Rs 300 crore for a pan India clean air programme in 102 cities. It has targeted a reduction of air pollution levels by 20%-



Kerala floods: extreme event caused by excessive rainfall over a few days. Archive



30% by 2024 using 2019 as base year. The initial focus is on putting in place monitoring facilities, identifying pollution sources and then determining health effects.

The government has repeatedly said there is "no conclusive data available in the country" to link death or disease "exclusively" to air pollution. It has also brushed aside esti-

mates of mortality and morbidity related to environmental pollution put out by the World Health Organization saying they were based on "models" and "extrapolations".

Most important river

Efforts to clean and rejuvenate the Ganga, which was a major election promise in 2014, are currently focused on tapping drains in cities and towns, and diverting



them into sewage treatment plants. Some of the infrastructure commissioned under the Namami Gange Project is likely to be ready this year, the government estimates. Missing from the conversation, however, is the large perspective on how the river system functions, including a broader focus on preserving its biodiversity and on pushing for deep and meaningful changes among the people who use, bathe in, pray to, and live off the Ganga.

Threat from sea-rise



The Environment Ministry has said that creating a more robust blue economy targeted at populations in the coastal areas is priority for this year. But the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification 2018, approved by the Union Cabinet in the last week of December, has triggered criticism and concern from environmentalists who fear the new rules may, in fact, dilute protection for the country's 7,500-km coastline. While the Centre has said it will "lead to enhanced activities in coastal regions", which will promote economic growth, critics argue that the opening up of fragile intertidal areas to construction and real estate activity would

impact livelihoods of fishing communities.

Safety of large dams



The Kerala disaster reopened the debate on the advantages and risks of big structures for water storage. The Central Water Commission said after the floods that "dams cannot provide any relief" should such extreme rainfall recur. The Centre has set up a Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project with the assistance of the World Bank, which will rehabilitate 198 dam projects across 7 states, including 28 in Kerala. While the objective is to oversee dam safety activities and monitor safety procedures, better coordination between the Centre and states is crucial to its success.

Demystify regulations



Environment Secretary C K Mishra told *The Indian Express* that one of the focus areas for the Ministry would be to demystify environment regulations, which, he said, would help in their better implementation. Mishra recently spoke of solid waste management rules that govern urban local bodies in the country.

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Committee to study Israel's model on water conservation

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, JANUARY 2

The Punjab Cabinet today decided to constitute a sub-committee to study ways and means to regulate the use of water in the state through conservation and management of critical water resources.

The sub-committee, comprising ministers Navjot Sidhu, Tripat Bajwa, Sukh Sarkaria and Razia Sultana, will visit Israel to study the water conservation model and examine the feasibility of its adoption in Punjab.

The move comes days after the government withdrew the Punjab Water Resources (Management and Regulation) Bill, 2018, during the winter session of the Vidhan Sabha.

As the issue came up at today's meeting, ministers representing urban areas termed it (proposed regulatory authority) an unpopular move, arguing it would lead to water tariff being raised every year.

The Cabinet asked the sub-committee to examine the objections raised by some ministers on the scope and functioning of the proposed Punjab Water Regulation and Development Authority (PWRDA).

In his presentation on groundwater crisis, Principal Secretary Water Resources Sarvjit Singh said of the 138 blocks, 109 were "over-exploited" and that groundwater extraction without prior approval had been prohibited in 45 blocks by the Central Groundwater Authority.

He said the total available groundwater was 324 billion cubic metres (BCM) and every

Govt move to set up
regulatory body upsets
some ministers

year 35.77 BCM was being extracted — which was 11.88 BCM in excess of the annual recharge of 23.89 BCM. At this rate, the water level in the state would fall below a depth of 300 metres in 28 years.

Pointing out that the water table was declining at the rate of 0.4 metre annually, he said as many as 16 districts of the total 22 fell in the category of those over-exploiting groundwater. Sangrur, Jalandhar and Moga topped the list followed by Kapurthala, Barnala, Fatehgarh Sahib, Patiala, Ludhiana, Faridkot, Ferozpur, Mansa, TaranTarn, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Ropar and Nawanshahr.

Online services

To ensure greater transparency and accountability in public services, a new set of draft rules under Section 20 of the Punjab Transparency and Accountability in Delivery of Public Service Act, 2018, have been framed by the Department of Governance Reforms and Public Grievances. It would ensure back-end computerisation of all public services within three years.

Economic offenders

Tightening the noose around absconding economic offenders, the Cabinet approved the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018, which entails attaching and confiscating their properties and assets.

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DJB to go underground to plug demand-supply gap

AUGMENTING WATER SUPPLY

DELHI'S WATER DEMAND

1200
MLD (million
gallons per day)

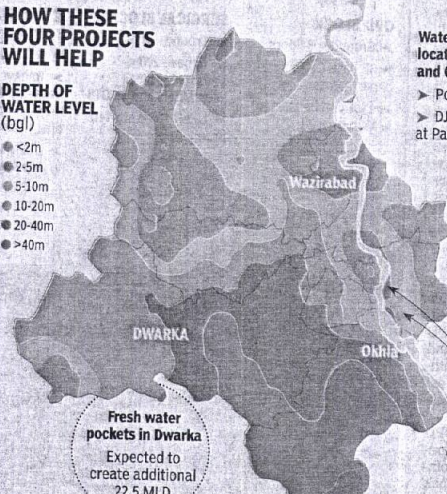
ACTUAL SUPPLY

900
MLD

HOW THESE FOUR PROJECTS WILL HELP

DEPTH OF WATER LEVEL (bgl)

- <2m
- 2-5m
- 5-10m
- 10-20m
- 20-40m
- >40m



Water extraction from 6 locations between Wazirabad and Okhla

- Potential of 383 MLD water
- DJB already tapping aquifers at Palla; other four locations to start working before summer



Restarting closed ranney wells and borewells
Additional 63 MLD of drinking water

Fresh water pockets in Dwarka
Expected to create additional 22.5 MLD

Additional bores in areas with high water table

Paras.Singh@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Delhi Jal Board has set in motion its plan to plug the ever-widening demand-supply gap in peak summers.

At a meeting chaired by chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who is also the DJB chairman, four different projects to exploit underground water resources have been cleared with a deadline of March 2019. Additionally, MLAs of areas in north and east Delhi — where the water table is high — have been asked to help identify points that can be used for sinking borewells.

Ankit Srivastava, technical adviser to DJB, said the biggest project among these four would involve water extraction from the riverside aquifers between Wazirabad and Okhla. "The Central Ground Water Board had identified six locations on the Yamuna floodplain between

Wazirabad and Okhla with a potential of 383 MLD. DJB is already extracting some water from two of the locations near the Palla stretch. However, most of the potential is untapped. It was decided at the meeting that the extraction be done to the full potential of 85 MGD," Srivastava said.

The four points where plants will be set up with ammonia-removal mechanism are: north of NH24 to the railway tracks near Akshradham, south of NH24 to Mayapuri Vihar, both sides of DND to Okhla barrage and, finally, Kalindi Kunj to Jaitpur. Also, WAPCOS — a consultant of DJB — has identified new freshwater pockets in Dwarka. "These pockets will now be developed to augment supply in the area. It is expected to get us an additional 22.5 MLD," he said.

A recent NITI Aayog report

had warned that based on current levels of exploitation, Delhi's groundwater reserves would be exhausted by 2020. A latest CGWB report stated that groundwater levels in more than 15% of Delhi's areas were now alarmingly below 40 metres.

DJB has argued that due studies have been conducted and the new extraction plans would not lead to adverse environmental effects. "We will be replenishing the aquifers through our lake development scheme too," Srivastava said.

DJB officials have been told to identify areas for additional bores in north and east Delhi where the water table is high. Srivastava said it was feasible to use such borewells in areas where the water table was above 8 metres. Besides making these areas self-sufficient, the surplus water will be supplied to south Delhi.